

THE RED DANCER

Entry No. 37 in Our Prize Story Competition

BY W. C. MORROW

BEING herself weak, Annie hated weakness in others. All her June butterfly nature resented the flabby disorganization into which her splendid idol had fallen, and her whole dainty small person fluttered in the passion of her revolt. Put her under the adoring domination of a man all fire and iron, and something shy and ulterior in her would come forth in the gracious power of sweetness. It was not in her to comprehend the tragedy in the breaking heart of the young giant whom she had thought she loved.

"Annie," he whimpered like a fool, his leaden eyes filled with a dull yearning, "you don't mean to say you're going to chuck me!"

"I have chucked you, Joe Scannell!" she blazed, standing before him in the magnificent rage of an apple blossom tossed by the wind as he crouched in the low rocking chair in her meager tenement house room. The chair, absurdly small, doubled his vast legs ridiculously and made him look like a monstrous ape. "Haven't you got that through your thick head yet?" she went on stormily. "I'm born to be somebody, I am! Do you think I'd marry a fellow that goes to pieces and acts like a blubberin' baboon at the Zoo just because he can't get work? How could you support me? And I'm just dead sick of workin' in the cannery! Do you want to marry me just to get a high priced actress to support you?" She stepped back and struck a tragic pose that to Scannell's blurred vision was surpassingly beautiful and thrilling. "Just look at me tied to a weepin' rhinoceros—me with my style and talents!"

"Actress?" his slow tongue echoed. "Oh, Annie, you—"

"That's what I said! And the job's waitin'."

The breaking hulk struggled to reassemble its parts; the man writhed in the tortures of reorganization. "Why, Annie, it won't last long—my being down. Work is slack in steel structure. It won't last long."

"It will last always with such babies as you, Joe Scannell. You know how the smart fellows get work in slack times,—they get out and hustle; they do politics, divvy their wages, and—"

"That's it!" he broke in, his repressed voice rising to a boom. "I'll dig in the sewer like a man before I do dirty work like that."

"Yes! That's where you belong—in the sewer. Go and wallow in it! I've had enough of you, and you know the way to the door!"

The big man's gaze fell to the hat between his hands. A slow heat reddened his face, and he came erect. He did not glance at Annie as he strode heavily to the door and wrenched it open. In a moment of weakness he turned a longing face on the light of his lonely life,—the foolish little orphan girl in need of a good man's love and care.

"Don't go on the stage, Annie," he humbly begged. "I'll make good."

Scorn curled her pretty lips, made altogether for kisses. "Make good! I've seen what you are! If you got to be a millionaire and owned a hunderd ottermobiles and wore diamonds, I'd despise you!"

His gaze dropped again, and the red in his face ran to purple as he said, choking, "Annie, I—I believe I'd kill you if you went on the stage."

Her sparkling blue eyes flashed wide in amused, incredulous astonishment. She tried to speak, and, failing, threw back her pretty head and laughed screamingly, hysterically, a jeering laugh more vitriolic than any words could have been.

Scannell turned and staggered out.

MCGRATH, foreman of the structural steel workers on the huge Metropolitan skyscraper, chose his men to suit himself, and he had been promised a prize if he pushed through the frame in clipped time. His sharp eyes were keenly estimating as with assumed impatience he listened to Joe Scannell,—he made much of the way in which a man who wanted a thing went about getting it.

"You've worked only six weeks in the last nine months?" he snapped. "Good men always have work." He would not have flung out that half insult had he not seen something unusual in the young man's eyes.

Scannell, who knew how far pride can kick a man into hunger and despair, and into the still deeper pit of shame and loneliness, much more the scorn of a woman



It Was Hard to Find a Man to Match Him.

he loves, met the other with the firmness of a man who has squared his back to the wall. "Give me a chance," he quietly said in a husky voice, and made neither promise nor boast.

McGrath liked to gird at young men with his rapier tongue, to see whether they wore their steel outside or in. "So your union has stopped your allowance, eh, and you have to hunt a job?" he ripped out.

"I've never taken a cent from my union, and I'd see it dead before I would!" answered Scannell calmly, though his nostrils twitched and his big right arm drew a trifle.

The foreman suppressed a smile as he calculated the drive of a face-blow from a fist so generously endowed with size and backing. But he was puzzled by the sullen repressed ferocity in the look of the man. With a prize before him it would never do to take on a workman who hated his trade for its failure to bring him steady employment, or worked merely to live, or had a grudge, or looked into some backward darkness. A man merely hungry has a milder look than Scannell's, which betrayed only a burning desire to get in and smash something.

"I'll take you," McGrath popped at him, although he had a full complement of men. "Here's five dollars, advance." He wanted to make sure that the splendid engine should be stoked with food for the strain ahead. "Report tomorrow morning."

DURING the first days the new man was slow and uncertain; for his great muscles suffered from disuse, and it takes time for food to undo what has been done by want of it. But McGrath was not uneasy, though every minute was precious. That puzzling look still burned in Scannell's eyes, a dark flame that kept the light hearted crew on the steel frame silent when near him. Day by day his boldness and drive

crowded his reviving capacity. Yet McGrath observed that Scannell, though daring, took no foolish risks and disclosed an unexpected softness when he helped to bring up from the basement to the ambulance or the narrow black wagon the lads who had misstepped on a sky beam or leaned too confidently against a gusty wind.

Scannell's mate at the chains in the lower end of the derrick-boom cable had been changed by McGrath several times, because it was hard to find a man able to match Scannell's headlong pace and prodigious strength. In swinging out into the chains, to be lowered from the towering frame into the deep chasm of the street for the steel pieces waiting on the truck, Scannell had trained the donkey-engine man to plunging speed. And at the bottom, his leap to the truck, his swift looping of the chain about a piece, his instant motion for a cautious start, and then frantic signals for a flying hoist while he boldly stood erect on the piece, put so heavy a strain on the procession of his mates that finally McGrath gave him Jimmy Caldwell, who was very small, and more kinds of a monkey than had ever broken into Scannell's experience.

Jimmy developed a string of queerly assorted attacks on Scannell's somber, ferocious seriousness. First was rallyery at Scannell's "blimed slowness." "W'y, man," said Jimmy, "if the fuse of a dinnymite bomb under your chair was lighted you'd kick the chair aw'y and sit down on the bomb an' be blowed to 'Eaven instead o' developin' the henery to git aw'y." With that, Jimmy made a flying leap into the chains aloft that jerked Scannell up goggle eyed. "That's the w'y to git about!" Jimmy triumphantly cried. And at the bottom of the plunge to the street, during which he whined at the "drratted protastigation" (which would have sounded less awful if he had pronounced it procrastination), he outstripped Scannell in a spring upon the truck and jeered at Scannell's lumbering in dragging up the heavy chain to loop it under the piece. "Oh, my heye!" exclaimed Jimmy in an outburst of disgust. "W'y didn't McGrath give me a man to work with that had the legs of a frog an' the harms of a juggalar? That comes o' me takin' a job under a bloody Irishman. 'E'd be blime sure to rob a graveyard of hany stiff that was big an' glum an' a hijit."

Scannell stopped dead short and glared at the grimacing gadfly of the dancing eyes and wizened little face. "I've a good mind to wring your neck," he said.

"W'at for? To make a stew of me an' heat me? My heye! but such helegant victuals in the inside of your American corn-beef-an'-cabbage careass would give you a millionaire's hapoplexy an' send ye shiverin' back to your tomb! Give me that chain!"

Scannell's big fist doubled; but when he realized how small Jimmy was he silently looped the chain and gave the signal to hoist.

Now, apparently McGrath could have done nothing more irrational than to give Scannell such a working mate,—the yoking of a rasping grasshopper and a sour tempered elephant to make a tremendous pull against time,—but the men aloft were satisfied, for they expected the weakened hoisting team to bring up steel at a slower pace and relax the pressure on the fitters. Thus they showed that they did not quite know Tim McGrath, and he was working for a prize.

Jimmy's flow of banter did not stop at Scannell's inefficiency,—and yet Scannell was doing three-fourths of the work at the hoist.

"Aw," sneered Jimmy, "w'y don't you wear kid gloves an' sling a tray at the swell cafes for tips?" Then, with a sly look under his brows, "M'ye you'd git a smile from Annie, the pretty young dancer that's got the ottermobile swells crazy."

"Who?" said Scannell, stopping short in the act of looping the chain on a piece, and giving the fuming cockney a furious look that set the whole British Empire capering with joy.

"Annie," grimaced the pithecan. "'Aven't you seen 'er blessed picture on the billboards, ye bloomin' grave-stone?"

SCANNELL had imagined that his Annie—ah! Annie was a sweet name!—was expunged from his slate. Yet he suddenly went sick and dared not ask Jimmy any questions. At noon he went hunting billboards, and saw a life-size picture of his Annie dancing short-skirted

and red along all the bold thoroughfares of the city. She was thus advertised by the Ballona Café as the most charming dancer of modern times. The public invited. Admission free. When the one o'clock whistle sounded, Scannell was at the hoist, white and ugly.

Whispered predictions flew round the building that any minute Scannell would pick Jimmy up, tie him into a knot, hold him up, drop him, and as he came down kick him through a tenth-story window across the street. It was really criminal for McGrath to sacrifice Jimmy in that way; for probably the rat's life had some value for him. About this time some of the men were beginning to construe certain signs as indicating a confidential arrangement between McGrath and Jimmy; but Scannell suspected nothing.

For some mysterious reason, the work done by the fitters and the riveters did not relax, although they were not aware of that; they were too busy expecting Scannell to ball Jimmy and kick him across the street; and, too, Jimmy made them laugh. McGrath had a theory that if you can get men to laugh at their work they never realize how much they are doing and never get tired.

Next day, which was Saturday, a ringing laugh startled the men. It was so round and hearty and reckless that it rang above the clang of sledgehammers on steel and the din of the pneumatic "guns" battering the red-hot rivets home.

"Hi!" shouted Jimmy in a steaming rage while the men laughed. Scannell was swinging a massive girder in the derrick chains to bring it within the outstretched reach of the fitters at the top of the frame. "Hi!" cried Jimmy, executing a dance of incredible agility on a perilous footing to avoid Scannell's savage swing of the steel. "D'ye think I'm a centipede with ninety-eight legs to spare an' two to keep on workin' with? Blime me, but you're a hally graveyard hescape you are, with the moki of the tomb on your blashed lintellect! But a corruks would be ashamed to wear such heyes as yours in 'is skull. W'at d'ye see with, your blime gizzard?"

It was then that Scannell laughed. And as soon as he had seen the girder clutched he made a short cut to

suddenly glum, and the little man's eyes glittered at him curiously. Then he hurried away to find McGrath.

SATURDAY night was a great time at the Ballona Café. A white haired man, with the black, overhanging brows and snapping mandible of a beetle, stood with an oily smile at the gorgeously gilded and lighted entrance of the Ballona, rubbing his hands as a welcome to visitors, with an especially unctuous rub when a party of rich slumming fashionables came up with affable condescension.

"Yes, ah, yes, Annie is dancing this evening," he dripped in a lardy voice in answer to queries. "Ah, ha, ha, the only Annie!" You could almost see the oil in which he continually washed his soft, white hands.

A big young man walked in with a stride that indicated something definite. The oily man had half a mind to stop the fellow and send him away to wash the steelworker's smudge from his hands and face and change his work clothes for respectable raiment; but the young giant's stride had a quality that made the man at the entrance refrain. Besides, this was Saturday night, and perhaps the fool had money. Ah! Annie was charming them all, from the rich profligates to the humblest toilers!

Not far behind Scannell entered a queer little man tremendously dressed in brilliant checks and a flaming red cravat, guiding a bashful Irishman who wished to escape observation.

"Tim McGrath!" breathed the functionary at the door. "You do us honor. Why haven't you got that little animal on a leash? How's the Tenth Ward?" "Booming," curtly answered McGrath, sidling off with his chaperon.

Within, the two looked round till they saw Scannell, who, after a fierce glance about, strode to a small table at the rear of the immense hall, ordered something with the grandeur of a mogul, and sat glaring at the drop curtain, before which an orchestra was laboring with a dismal effort at cheerfulness. The little man nudged McGrath and grinned in a way that might have cracked his hard face. McGrath nodded, and closely studied Scannell. Then the two slipped along the side through

the rigid, pale young giant with the ominous look. As the money of a workman is as good as anybody's else, and as Scannell was very quiet, the bouncer sauntered on.

With a grand orchestral flourish the curtain rose and Annie swam out in a sea of red. Her fluffy gauze skirts were red, her stockings and slippers were red; the sanguine scheme was broken only by the dazzling white of her bare arms and shoulders and the fire that flashed from her eyes. What grace, what beauty, what daintiness! And all so girlishly sweet! No wonder a tightening ran through the great crowd in its smother of smoke and smells—all blind to the pitiful little droop of unhappiness at the corners of the rosy mouth.

Her dainty toe tapped till the orchestra found the time, and then Annie floated into a dreamy dance which made the crowd breathe deep and wish for more eyes to see with.

Joe Scannell, white as a ghost, lurched to his feet and looked over the vast crowd packed at tables covering the floor between him and the stage. Annie did not see him; the spotlight had blinded her to the people in the audience. Then her butterfly life drifted among the flowers of the music and lights in exquisite, unconscious abandon.

IN the tenet of the stillness, Scannell threw off his cap, clutched his tousled head between his hands, and called in a ringing voice that turned all faces toward him: "Annie!"

She stopped short, picked out his towering figure, started, stood a moment quivering in terror, and then with a scream threw her arms wildly and sank in a soft crumple on the stage.

There was a moment of dismayed inactivity. Before it could pass, Scannell was plunging toward the stage, flinging people aside like straws, overturning tables and chairs that stood in his way, and littering the floor with smashed glass. A roared command rose from the rear: "Stop him! Stop him! He'll kill her!" The bouncer had found his voice and was bellowing the warning, as, drawing his club, he plowed through the scrambling mass after Scannell.

"Hi! take 'im, Sir; you follow the lad," said the little man to McGrath, and began leaping the tables as lightly as a monkey.

McGrath hesitated a moment in astonishment at Jimmy's audacity, and he did not move till he saw the spring that landed Jimmy on the man's back with an embracing grip of arms and legs that sent the helpless man staggering and roaring like a wounded buffalo. Then McGrath lunged through the panic stricken mob for the platform.

By this time Scannell had torn his way through the orchestra and bounded upon the stage. There he dropped to his knees, and rose with Annie held as lightly and tenderly in his arms as though she were a baby. All unconscious of the roar and surge on the vast floor before him, he held her close, pressed his cheek to hers, and eagerly called:

"Annie! Annie dear! It's Joe!"

McGrath sprang up beside him, cast a swift, uneasy glance at a swirling vortex of riot in the middle of the floor, where a buffalo and a monkey in a deadly lock were bellowing and squeaking a duo, and seized Scannell's arm.

"Bring her to the dressing room!" he shouted in Scannell's ear.

The young man turned a startled look of recognition on him. McGrath was already pushing him off the stage, and in a moment had Annie lying on a couch in the wings. She opened her starry blue eyes on Scannell's wretched face as he knelt beside her and held one of her cold hands pressed to his lips.

"Annie!" was all he could say through his choke; but she understood.

She was beginning to rise in the joyous new life of an opening rosebud, when there bounded in a little man with torn clothes and queer face scratches that looked like new wrinkles.

"Safe, Sir?" he gasped to McGrath, after a comprehending glance at the group.

"Yes. Now you fly before that brass buttoned scow runs you down!" and he thrust Jimmy toward the stage door.

"Oh, my heye!" cried Jimmy in flight.

Annie took Scannell's face between her palms as she sat up on the couch, and gazed wonderingly into his lovelit eyes. "Oh, Joe," she breathed, "you frightened me so! I thought— Oh, you don't know how lonely and unhappy I've been, and how I hate this world! You'll never leave me again, will you?"

His tongue was useless; but he had capable arms—and weren't Annie's lips made just for kisses?

THE LIGHT OF CRYSTALS

ALL diamonds do not shine in the dark after exposure to sunlight or electric light; but some do to a remarkable degree. A diamond rubbed with a woolen cloth, or against a hard surface, will sometimes shine brilliantly. The emission of light is a property belonging to many, if not all, kinds of crystals.

A variety of white marble found at Hastings on the Hudson, New York, gives out a flame colored glow when pounded, and bright flashes when scratched with steel. In Northern New York is found a kind of stone, known locally as "hell-fire rock," which exhibits bright, sulphur colored streaks when scratched in the dark. Pieces of rose quartz rubbed together exhibit brilliant flashes, sometimes bright enough to illuminate the hands of the person holding them. Smoked quartz and other varieties sometimes show a similar phenomenon.



A Roar Rose from the Rear, "Stop Him! He'll Kill Her!"

Jimmy by walking a dangerously narrow joist, and took the astounded chimpanzee's hand.

"I'm sorry, Jimmy," he said, and added, "There's the twelve o'clock whistle. Come and have a feed with me."

Many of the men heard the amazing invitation. Scannell had been the one among them to eat his bucket lunch in surly solitude.

The little man was aghast. "Feed with you!" he exclaimed. Then, drawing a long breath, "Blime me if I don't! An' the face of me you'll have to fill is a yard wide an' a mile deep."

"Good!" said Scannell. "I'll get a shovel from a street sweeper to fill it with."

Jimmy's rat eyes stretched wide over the prodigality with which Scannell ordered the luncheon at a cheap restaurant, and the orbital stretching became alarming when Scannell asked:

"Where is the Ballona Café?"

"W'at!" cried Jimmy in an ecstasy of astonishment. "Don't you know the bally streets in your own town, and d'ye think a mummy from the 'catombs of Egypt could get a smile from the honky Annie, with hall the swells in hopposition to ye? My heye!"

"Who said I was going to try?" growled Scannell,

the crowd and seated themselves at a table in an alcove halfway up to the stage.

"Is he drinking, Jimmy?" asked McGrath when they were settled.

"Naw! Just paid for the stuff to 'old 'is seat, Sir."

"Do you think he has come to kill her?"

"Blime me if I know, Sir. You never kin tell w'at a bally ghost will do. But we'll be on 'and, you an' me."

The foreman nodded thoughtfully, and was anxious. "I don't like the look in his eye. But he's a good lad, Jimmy."

"Good! 'E's the w'itest man that 'andles iron. An' we'll see 'im through. They'll try to crack 'is 'ead w'en he cuts loose."

"We'll see," said McGrath, his lips tightening.

The curtain rose and fell on one performer after another. Scannell sat like a stone man, staring at the stage. The orchestra worked dispiritedly till Annie's turn came. Then the leader sat up, and a thrill ran all the way down from the complaining first fiddle to the melancholy bass.

Meanwhile, the oily man at the entrance had said something to the bouncer, a big man in a special policeman's uniform, and that gentleman had sauntered past Scannell's table two or three times, sharply observing